

**BOARD OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES**  
**PROPOSED CONTENT CHANGES**  
**MFT EDUCATION**

This document highlights the major content and other changes that have been proposed. For all changes, refer to (document name). For conciseness, any subdivisions (i.e., letters (a), (b)) that are not proposed to be changed are not printed in this document.

**Amend BPC § 4980.03 as follows:**

- (i) "Client centered advocacy" as used in this chapter includes researching, identifying, and accessing resources, or other activities, related to obtaining or providing services and supports for clients or groups of clients receiving psychotherapy or counseling services.

**Add BPC § 4980.36 as follows:**

- (a) This section applies to applicants for licensure or registration began graduate study on or after August 1, 2012.
- (b) Applicants for licensure or registration shall possess a doctor's or master's degree conferred by a school, college or university accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education, approved by the Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education, or a program accredited by the Commission on the Accreditation of Marriage and Family Therapy Education, in one of the following disciplines:
- (1) marriage, family, and child counseling
  - (2) marital and family therapy
  - (3) psychology
  - (4) clinical psychology
  - (5) counseling psychology
  - (6) counseling with an emphasis in marriage, family, and child counseling
  - (7) counseling with an emphasis in marriage and family therapy
- (c) A doctor's or master's degree program that qualifies for licensure or registration shall do all of the following:
- (1) Integrate marriage and family therapy principles throughout its curriculum.
  - (2) Integrate the principles of mental health recovery-oriented care and methods of service delivery in recovery oriented practice environments throughout its curriculum.
  - (3) Allow for innovation and individuality in the education of marriage and family therapists.
  - (4) Encourage students to develop those personal qualities that are intimately related to effective practice such as integrity, sensitivity, flexibility, insight, compassion, and personal presence.
  - (5) Permit an emphasis or specialization that may address any one or more of the unique and complex array of human problems, symptoms, and needs of Californians served by marriage and family therapists.
  - (6) Integrate the understanding of various cultures and the social and psychological implications of socio-economic position throughout its curriculum.
  - (7) Provide students with the opportunity to meet with various consumers and family members of consumers of mental health services to enhance understanding of their experience of mental illness, treatment, and recovery.

(d) A doctor's or master's degree program that qualifies for licensure or registration shall contain no less than 60 semester or 90 quarter units of instruction that includes, but is not limited to all of the following.

(1) Diagnosis, assessment, prognosis and treatment of mental disorders, including severe mental disorders, evidence based practices, psychological testing and psychopharmacology.

(2) At least 12 semester or 18 quarter units in theories, principles, and methods of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations directly related to marriage and family therapy, and marital and family systems approaches to treatment and how these theories can be applied therapeutically with individuals, couples, families, adults, children, adolescents, and groups to improve, restore, or maintain healthy relationships.

(3) Developmental issues from infancy to old age. This instruction shall include:

(A) The effects of developmental issues on individuals, couples, and family relationships.

(B) The psychological, psychotherapeutic, and health implications of developmental issues and their effects.

(C) Aging and its biological, social, cognitive, and psychological aspects.

(D) A variety of cultural understandings of human development.

(E) The understanding of human behavior within the social context of socioeconomic status and other contextual issues affecting social position.

(F) The understanding of human behavior within the social context of a representative variety of the cultures found within California.

(4) The broad range of matters that may arise within marriage and family relationships and life events within a variety of California cultures including:

(A) Child abuse assessment and reporting

(B) Spousal or partner abuse assessment, detection, intervention strategies, and same gender abuse dynamics

(C) Cultural factors relevant to abuse of partners and family members.

(D) Childbirth

(E) Child rearing, parenting and stepparenting

(F) Marriage

(G) Divorce

(H) Blended families

(I) Long term care

(J) End of life

(K) Grief

Instruction shall include the psychological, psychotherapeutic, community, and health implications of these matters and life events.

(5) Cultural competency and sensitivity, including a familiarity with the racial, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds of persons living in California.

(6) An understanding of the effects of socioeconomic status on treatment and available resources.

(7) Multicultural development and cross-cultural interaction, including experiences of race, ethnicity, class, spirituality, sexual orientation, gender and disability and their incorporation into psychotherapeutic process.

- (8) Human sexuality including the study of physiological, psychological and social-cultural variables associated with sexual behavior, gender identity and the assessment and treatment of psychosexual dysfunction.
- (9) Substance abuse, co-occurring disorders, and addiction including all of the following:
- (A) The definition of substance use disorders, co-occurring disorders and addiction.
  - (B) Medical aspects of substance use disorders and co-occurring disorders.
  - (C) The effects of psychoactive drug use.
  - (D) Current theories of the etiology of substance abuse and addiction.
  - (E) The role of persons and systems that support or compound substance abuse and addiction.
  - (F) Major approaches to identification, evaluation and treatment of substance use disorders, co-occurring disorders and addiction, including best practices.
  - (G) Legal aspects of substance abuse.
  - (H) Populations at risk with regard to substance use disorders and co-occurring disorders.
  - (I) Community resources offering screening, assessment, treatment and follow-up for the affected person and family.
  - (K) Recognition of substance use disorders, co-occurring disorders and addiction and appropriate referral.
  - (L) The prevention of substance use disorders and addiction.
  - (M) For purposes of this paragraph, "co-occurring disorders" is defined as a mental illness and substance abuse diagnosis occurring simultaneously in an individual.
- (10) California law and professional ethics for marriage and family therapists. This course shall include, but not be limited to, the following areas of study:
- (A) Contemporary professional ethics and statutory, regulatory, and decisional laws that delineate the profession's scope of practice.
  - (B) The therapeutic, clinical, and practical considerations involved in the legal and ethical practice of marriage and family therapy, including family law.
  - (C) The current legal patterns and trends in the mental health professions.
  - (D) The psychotherapist/patient privilege, confidentiality, the patient dangerous to self or others, and the treatment of minors with and without parental consent.
  - (E) A recognition and exploration of the relationship between a practitioner's sense of self and human values and his or her professional behavior and ethics.
  - (F) Differences in legal and ethical standards for different types of work settings.
  - (G) Licensing law and licensing process.
- (11) Practicum that includes direct client contact, as follows:
- (A) A minimum of six semester or nine quarter units of practicum in a supervised clinical placement that provides supervised fieldwork experience.
  - (B) A minimum of 225 hours of face-to-face experience counseling individuals, couples, families, or groups. Up to 75 of such hours may be gained performing client centered advocacy as defined in Section 4980.43.
  - (C) A student must be enrolled in a practicum course while counseling clients.
  - (D) The practicum shall provide training in all of the following areas:
    - (i) applied use of theory and psychotherapeutic techniques
    - (ii) assessment
    - (iii) diagnosis
    - (iv) prognosis
    - (v) treatment of individuals and premarital, couple, family, and child relationships, including dysfunctions, healthy functioning, health promotion, illness prevention.

- and working with families
- (vi) professional writing including documentation of services, treatment plans, and progress notes
- (vii) how to find and use resources

Educational institutions are encouraged to design the practicum required by this paragraph to include marriage and family therapy experience in low-income and multicultural mental health settings.

(e) A degree qualifying for licensure or registration shall include instruction in the following areas:

- (1) Case management
- (2) Systems of care for the severely mentally ill
- (3) Public and private services and supports available for the severely mentally ill
- (4) Community resources for victims of abuse
- (5) Disaster and trauma response
- (6) Advocacy for the severely mentally ill
- (7) Collaborative treatment

The instruction required in this subdivision may be provided either in credit level coursework or through extension programs offered by the degree granting institution.

(f) The board has the authority to make the final determination as to whether a degree meets all requirements, including, but not limited to, course requirements, regardless of accreditation or approval.

(g) Each applicant shall submit to the board a certification from the educational institution stating that the institution's required curriculum for graduation and any associated coursework completed by the applicant satisfies the requirements of this section.

(h) Each educational institution preparing applicants to qualify for licensure shall notify each of its students by means of its public documents or otherwise in writing that its degree program is designed to meet the requirements of Section 4980.36 and shall certify to the board that it has so notified its students.

(i) The changes made to this section are intended to improve the educational qualifications for licensure in order to better prepare future licentiates for practice, and is not intended in any way to expand or restrict the scope of licensure for marriage and family therapists.

**Add BPC § 4980.72 as follows:**

This section applies to persons who are licensed outside of California and apply for licensure on or after January 1, 2014.

The board may issue a license to a person who, at the time of application, holds a valid license issued by a board of marriage counselor examiners, board of marriage and family therapists, or corresponding authority of any state or country, if all of the following are true:

- (1) The applicant's education is substantially equivalent as defined in Section 4980.78.
- (2) The applicant's supervised experience is substantially the equivalent of this chapter. The board shall consider hours of experience obtained outside of California during the six-year period immediately preceding the applicant's initial licensure by that state as a marriage and family therapist.

(3) The person successfully completes the licensing examinations required by this chapter.

**Add BPC § 4980.74 as follows:**

This section applies to persons who apply for registration or licensure on or after January 1, 2014 and who are not licensed outside of California as described in Section 4980.72 and have education or experience gained outside of California.

(a) Education gained while residing outside of California shall be accepted toward the registration or licensure requirements if it is substantially equivalent as defined in Section 4980.78.

(b) Experience gained outside of California shall be accepted toward the licensure requirements if it is substantially equivalent to that required by this chapter.

**Add BPC § 4980.78 as follows:**

This section applies to persons who apply for registration or licensure on or after January 1, 2014.

(a) The Board, in its discretion, may accept education gained outside of California when it is substantially equivalent to Section 4980.36. Substantial equivalency means that the applicant meets the following requirements:

(1) The applicant's degree contains a minimum of all of the following:

(A) 48 semester or 60 quarter units overall.

(B) Six (6) semester or nine (9) quarter practicum units.

(C) 150 practicum hours of face-to-face counseling.

(D) 12 semester or 18 quarter units in the areas of marriage, family, and child counseling and marital and family systems approaches to treatment as specified in paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Section 4980.36.

(2) The applicant's degree title need not be identical to that required by subdivision (b) of Section 4980.36.

(3) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), if the applicant's degree does not contain all of the content or number of units required by subdivision (d) of Section 4980.36, the applicant shall complete the missing course content and units required by subdivision (d) of Section 4980.36.

(4) The applicant completes credit level coursework from a degree granting institution that provides all of the following:

(A) Instruction regarding the principles of mental health recovery oriented care and methods of service delivery in recovery model practice environments

(B) An understanding of various California cultures and the social and psychological implications of socio-economic position.

(C) Structured meeting with various consumers and family members of consumers of mental health services to enhance understanding of their experience of mental illness, treatment and recovery.

(D) Behavioral addiction and co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders as specified in paragraph (9) of subdivision (c) of Section 4980.36.

(5) The applicant completes a course in California law and professional ethics. The content shall include advertising, scope of practice, scope of competence, treatment of minors, confidentiality, dangerous patients, psychotherapist-patient privilege, recordkeeping, patient access to records, HIPAA, dual relationships, child abuse, elder and dependent adult abuse, online therapy, insurance reimbursement, civil liability, disciplinary actions and unprofessional conduct, ethics complaints and ethical standards, termination of therapy, standards of care, relevant family law, therapist disclosures to patients, differences in legal and ethical standards in different types of work settings, and licensing law and licensing process.